THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) The work of Bankura Damodar River (BDR) Gauge Conversion project was included in the Railway Budget, 1998-99, with an anticipated cost of Rs. 100 crore. As per procedure, part-Estimate for the first phase of work on this project from Bankura to Beliatore (20 km.) has been received by Railway Board for sanction from the Zonal Railway and is under process. Tenders for earthwork and minor bridges for this phase of work have been invited. Actual work, however, will be taken up only after the Estimate is sanctioned. Work on this Gauge Conversion Project will be progressed and completed in the coming years as per the availability of resources.

Decline in Freight Traffic

1826. DR. JAGANNATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the share of Railways in both passenger as well as freight traffic is declining;

(b) if so, the Railways' share in the Seventh, Eighth and the Ninth Five Year Plans in both passenger as well as freight traffic;

(c) the reasons for this declining share; and

(d) the steps taken to attract both the passenger and freight traffic?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Railways have carried the following traffic during the VII, VIII and the first two years of the IX-Plan.

	Passenger (BPKM)	Freight (BTKM)
VII Plan	1311	1127
VIII Plan	1614	1302
IX Plan:- 1997-98	380	284
1998-99	395	281

Figures for the remaining period will be available after the completion of the 9th Plan. Corresponding figures for road traffic is not available.

Railways' share in passenger traffic has declined from 22.4% in 1986-87 to 20% in 1996-97 and in freight traffic from 51.5% in 1986-87 to 40% in 1996-97.

(c) The main reasons for the declining share of Railways in freight as well as passenger traffic are as below:—

(i) Inadequate capacity

(ii) Reduced plan outlay budgetary support

(iii) Reduced traffic offerings in core sector

(d) The Railways are taking a number of steps for correcting the imbalance in the intermodal share of railways and roadways, which are given below:—

(i) Improvement in productivity of assets

(ii) Setting up of domestic division of container Corporation of India

(iii) Creation of capacity on saturated routes and terminals

(iv) Exploring non tariff avenues

(v) Improved services

(vi) Introduction of longer passenger trains

Rail Under-Bridges and Over-Bridges in Punjab

1827. SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the present number of rail under-bridges and over-bridges in Punjab;

(b) whether there is any proposal to construct more under and over-bridges in that State in the near future;